

A lonely walk from home

Jessica Crews is a senior at Meridian High School. Her parents are Edward and Nancy Crews and she has two older sisters, Evelyn and Laura, who attend Mississippi State University. She is considering a career in physical therapy.

"My dad has always liked poetry, which gave me an idea to write one for the paper," Jessica said. "He is a retired Naval officer, and his father was in the war, so he understands the war better than me."

On this journey they will go;
a long one far from home
To the whole wide world,
a walk that's all their own
They will all meet up
on their way to fight.
Intentions were to guard their men
all day and all the night.
Though they did not know each other,
they still found time to talk.
Extra-friendly they were that night
on their never ending walk.
Many gathered nicely
to make an easier trip
Which made the night go faster
while guarding a dusty strip.



Crews

There was an optimist
who led the group
He spoke of honesty,
love, and truth
He owned a flashy smile
and dark brown curls
His charm and charisma
wooed all the lonely girls
He was also funny and wise
in so many different ways
His knowledge and advice
stayed with people for days
His troops always looked to him
when times would get rough
A leader he was made for,
for he was brave and very tough.

The conspiracy man was quite
a character, always laughing loud
His corny jokes were unbearable to most,
but of them he was proud
He was a round and hearty man,
who always had an opinion
He believed the tragedies of life
had most of the time been planned on
With his belly round
his shirt clung tight
You could always pick him
out of the crowd, even in the night
But behind his grays and his
scruffy beard, lies a faithful man
For behind his family, his wife and
his country he will always stand.

A woman joins the ranks of men,
she's gaudy and she's wild
She wears her golden curls up high,
and combat boots with style
This lady never swears or lies
to any human soul
Her heart grows bigger every day,
and fills our empty holes
This lady is from the Midwest plains
and always holds her ground
Her unit thought her useless at first,
but any of them she could surely pound
She's become their dame,
their "younger sister" so to say
This care and worry is welcomed by her,
and for that she is thankful for each day.

Of course each unit must have a klutz
to balance out all the rest
He is shy but smart in tactics and techniques,
but usually outcast as a pest
This man is tall with thick prescriptions,
and stringy brown hair
His lanky arms were frigid
and his complexion very fair
When he talks it's theory and science
that holds the conversation
He will probably become a physicist
or a sort from that classification
The Gilligan of the crew he will always be,
but no Skipper will keep him in line
For this young lad is a loner,
but his place he will find in time.

These few will walk another road one day,
perhaps with new strangers
And those they have just learned about
will move on to other dangers
Each new troop will walk together as one,
but each man will be alone
For their families and loved ones
are always waiting anxiously at home.
To here a call or read a letter,
a sign that they are OK
But men alone are not OK;
they are lonely living in dismay
At home we sit beside our fireplaces,
safe and sound in our own land
This life we live is protected for us by men
and women who fight hand-in-hand
One day we will watch them come home,
they'll go to their life changed forever
We'll never know the trials they went through,
they hold their secrets together
They all share something in common,
the fighting and hiding that sets the tone
These four are together on this still night,
on this lonely walk from home.

— Jessica Crews

A soldier's prayer

Steven Shadwick is a senior at Meridian High School. He lives with his mother, Gloria Shadwick, and attends West Mt. Moriah Baptist Church — where he plays piano and sings in the choir. He plans to pursue a career in neurosurgery.

Lord, give me strength against my enemies
So I may stand and fight,
Lord, give me wisdom to understand,
The difference in what's wrong and what's right.
Lord, give me patience to endure,
Long days and cold nights,
And give me pride to remember,
The fight is for red, blue and white.

— Steven Shadwick



PHOTO BY STEVE GILLESPIE / THE MERIDIAN STAR

HEARTFELT MESSAGE

Lauderdale County District 4 Supervisor Joe Norwood visits a memorial on the Lauderdale County Courthouse lawn honoring fallen U.S. Marine Pfc. Chris Mabry. Mabry, 19, was a resident of southwest Lauderdale County. He was killed in action in Iraq in April 2004. Norwood had the following message for U.S. troops: "I would like to thank them for their leadership in promoting this country with their service and protection. We are grateful we have men and women across this nation who give of themselves. Our prayers are with those who have fallen and we offer our continued prayers to men and women in service, as well as their loved ones back home."



Sissy and Johnny Gardner

When you left, days got a little darker

Sissy Gardner of Meridian submitted this "Letter from Home" to her husband, Master Sgt. Johnny Gardner of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 150th Combat Engineer Battalion. Sadie is the couple's dog.

Johnny,
I know it is not easy to be away from all that you know and love. A strange country, with strange customs, no Sissy, no Sadie, but worst of all ... no golf!
When you left Meridian to serve your country, days got a little darker, nights got a little longer. Not just for me, your wife, but for everyone who knows and loves you. I worry about who's going to cut the grass, not ours, but all the neighbors' grass you kept cut without ever saying a word.
Your heart has always been to protect and serve, and now the needs of many outweigh the needs of few. The guys all call you "Pops," a title that is well-deserved after almost 39 years in the Army National Guard. Your loyalty and dedication are very much appreciated.
Keep the coin your daughter, Sara, gave you close to your heart, and with God speed come home safely to all who know and love you. See ya when I see ya.

Sissy and Sadie